CHAPTER SEVEN

ATTITUDES TO FAMILY SIZE AMONG UNMARRIED JUNIOR CIVIL SERVANTS

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Introduction

The outstanding factor in the decline of population growth in a number of countries over the past eighty or more years has been what Banks has termed the "retreat from parenthood" (1954 : 4), the fact that many people no longer wish to have the numbers of children that their grandparents had. The earliest signs of these changes in attitudes and behaviour have been noted to take place among the upper middle classes and professionals, followed by civil servants, clerks, teachers and so on (Banks, 1954: 5). This shift in attitudes and behaviour has already begun to be documented in Ghana. As Caldwell's study showed with material collected just ten years ago, socio-economic and urban-rural residence fertility differentials though small had already come into existence. Changes in the ways of life were seen to be making large families more burdensome for the urban middle class (Caldwell, 1968: 187). In the sample he surveyed at that time the women were noted increasingly to regard *four* children as being the right number and men *six*. Professor Ampofo's recent study of women teachers has confirmed these aspirations (1971: 106). It is this apparent retreat from parenthood, at least in its traditional proportions, which we wish to explore further in this paper, among a set of people already singled out as being in the forefront of such changes by their type of occupations and place of residence.

The Data and the Design

The data discussed in this paper have been extracted from a study primarily focused on married junior civil servants.[1] Here we are concerned with that section of the sample who were found to be without spouse or child. Our aim is to examine their attitudes concerning family size and family planning.

Obviously as one of our research objectives is to provide data relevant to policy-makers, the unmarried and childless are just as important a group to study as those who are already parents, for we may in the process highlight facts about their ideas and attitudes which may give useful guides in the design of future educational programmes. Moreover they form part of the group which can be influenced to most effect, for their child-bearing and rearing careers are still in the future and thus potentially subject to suggestions relevant to their family well-being.

In research design this project partly resembles that of Caldwell's study of the urban elite (1968) in that we are looking at two parallel samples, one of men and one of women. Though both samples are admitedly small, they are quite independent and so we may be able to use the results of one survey to support those of the other.

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The samples are analytical in nature, not representative, selected specifically for the exploration of variables correlated with differences in attitudes concerning family size and planning.[2] One sample comprised 78 nurses, the other 80 clerical officers[3]. It was precisely because civil servants and clerks have elsewhere been frequently noted to be in the forefront of the family size change process, along with professionals and teachers and so on, that we chose them. In particular we were interested in finding out within this category those who were retreating or intending to retreat most rapidly from parenthood.

The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. Almost all the men and women in the samples were aged between twenty and thirty, the average age of both samples being twenty-five. The majority had attended secondary schools and all had been trained locally for their jobs. In both samples about a third were Ga, a third Akan, and one-sixth or fewer Ewe. Only a handful came from the Northern and Upper Regions.

Over half of the women had fathers in clerical and professional type employment but only two-fifths of the men. Thus in both spatial and socio-economic terms a large proportion of these two populations is mobile, the Ga members forming the local element.

Family Size: Desired/Ideal

We found, as have those before us, that the desired family size for the majority was four as was the ideal family size (cf. Caldwell, 1968; Ampofo, 1971). The number wanted ranged between two and six among the women and two and 15 among the men, with a greater proportion of the men wanting five or more children (36 per cent as compared with 17 per cent) (see Table 1). Ideas as to how many children would be too many or too few were similar. Both samples considering an average of eight children too many and two not enough (1.6 was the mean in the case of the nurses).

TABLE 1

Desired Family Size by Occupation

Desired Family Size	Occupation			
	Nurses		Clerks	
	N	%	N	%
2 - 3	(13)	17	(10)	13
4	(52)	66	(14)	51
5	(13)	17	(29)	36
Total	(78)	100	(80)	100

Nine out of ten nurses and three out of four clerks said that educated people in Ghana want smaller families now than they did twenty-five years ago. They saw the most important reasons for this as being economic and connected with the education and good care of the children, who were thus viewed by the majority as being increasingly expensive (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Observations of Decrease in Family Size and Reasons by Occupation

	Nurses	Clerks
% observe decrease	90	76
% give economic reasons	46	46
% say because of good care and education of children	45	46

TABLE 3

Knowledge and Attitudes of Nurses and Clerks Towards Family Planning and Family Planning Programmes (Percentages)

Planning	Nurses N=78	Clerks N=80
1. It is a good idea for an educated couple to plan the number of children they have	91	93
2. Would like to know more about Family Planning	72	79
Programmes		
3. More attention should be paid to husbands and couples	50	37
4. Demand in the rural areas is greater than the supply of advice, staff and clinics.	41	31
5. Far more clinics and more efficient information service needed. ...	21	14
Knowledge		
6. Know two or more contraceptive methods.	76	58
7. Intend to get advice in future.	44	57
Spacing/Timing of Births		
8. It is a good thing for a couple to space the births of their children...	86	80
9. Ideal spacing between births of children of an educated couple two years or more	92	90
10. Ideal age for an educated man to stop getting children 45 or earlier.	64	59
11. Ideal age for an educated woman to stop getting children 35 or earlier.	36	33
12. Self will stop having children by 35 (nurses) by 45 (clerks).... ...	24	68

Family Planning Knowledge and Attitudes

The attitudes of the two samples to the space and planning of births in general and to the activities of the Family Planning Programmes may be described as very positive (see Table 3). Over 90 per cent of both men and women approved of educated couples planning the number of children they should have and about three-quarters stated that they would like to know more about family planning. Knowledge was already widespread, with three-quarters of the nurses and three out of five clerks claiming that they knew of two or more contraceptive techniques. Moreover about half intended to get advice in the future.

Regarding their attitudes to the Family Planning Programmes, the most important finding was that half of the women and 37 per cent of the men complained that more attention should be paid to *husbands* and *couples* by the programmes in the spreading of information and advice instead of the present concentration on women alone. A number thought that there was a need for more clinics and a more efficient information service, especially in the rural areas.

On the question of timing and spacing of births more than 80 per cent said that they approved, the main reasons given including the health of the mother and child and for financial and educational reasons. An even larger majority advocated the spacing of births at intervals of two years or more. When we probed however to discover what individual respondents thought of the timing of births over the life cycle of the parent — that is at what age a man or a woman should stop child-bearing — we found that only about one in three thought that an educated woman should stop child-bearing at 35 (an age after which we are told the health risks of child-bearing sharply increase). Moreover fewer than two-thirds thought that a man should stop getting children at the age of 45. (Yet children born beyond that age are likely to be still in school when their father has already retired from work to the possible detriment of their higher education and care.) Similar attitudes were seen when we asked the men and women at what age they thought they themselves would stop producing children. Fewer than a quarter of the nurses thought that they would stop at 35 and only 68 per cent of the men thought they would stop at 45. It would seem that Family Planning educational programmes taking note of such facts might profitably concentrate more upon the serious health and financial hazards of continuing child-bearing beyond such ages, rather than to keep advocating spacing, which as further enquiries may confirm is already a widely accepted family policy and practice.

It is noteworthy too that approval of cessation of child-bearing by the age of 35 for women is associated with smaller desired family size aspirations and vice versa. Thus while six out of thirteen nurses who desired small families thought they would stop at 35, only two out of thirteen wanting large families thought so.

On the other hand examination of Knowledge and Practice Scores and Family Planning Attitude Scores according to desired family size did not appear to indicate any straightforward association between greater knowledge and a more positive attitude towards Family Planning on the one hand and small family size norms on the other. Advocates of large and small family size norms both tend to know and approve of Family Planning techniques (see Table 4).

In summary then we have found that the population studied desire numbers of children well below the traditional number, but in line with earlier studies of sections of the urban elite and that they approve of the principles of family planning, birth spacing and the activities of the Family Planning programmes.

In addition they already have before marriage a certain amount of technical knowledge and

desire more and are prepared to get advice in future. Their ideas about the bearing of children however, throughout the span of the potential reproductive period are not in line with modern trends at all.

TABLE 4

MEAN K.P. AND F.P. ATTITUDE SCORES BY DESIRED FAMILY SIZE AND OCCUPATION*

Desired Family Size	*Nurses*		*Clerks*	
	Mean KP Score	*Mean FP Score*	*Mean KP Score*	*Mean FP Score*
2–3	2.5	6.2	3.0	5.7
4	2.4	6.1	3.2	6.1
5	3.4	5.9	2.4	5.8
Total	2.9	6.1	2.9	6.0

Desired Family Size and Mobility

Our remaining task is perhaps the more interesting one, for it is an examination of the proposition that there is likely to be an association between desired family size and mobility. As we stated at the outset we have a population which while homogeneous with respect to education level, marital status, child-bearing age and type of occupation and place of residence is yet heterogeneous with respect to place of origin and parental background variables, including father's occupation. In other words some of the population are locals, others are immigrants, mainly from the Akan and Volta areas; and while many have parents with lower levels of education and occupations than themselves, some are children of clericals and professionals. Thus we have a population which varies according to two important variables— social and spatial mobility — and can be classified accordingly in a two-way property space into local non-mobiles (Ga, with clerical and professional fathers); local socially mobiles (Ga, with manual and skilled fathers); migrant non-mobiles (with Akan, Ewe, etc., clerical and professional fathers) and migrant mobiles (Akan and Ewe, etc., with illiterate, manual and skilled fathers).

This classification is needed for our examination of a number of propositions concerning the relation between mobility and fertility. As has recently been pointed out the relation between spatial mobility and fertility has long been the subject of population studies. For example, nearly thirty years ago Alva Myrdal was writing of feelings of insecurity "a psychological translation of the greater mobility of modern times" (1945: 54–5) as being one of the major active motives for family reduction, a theme which has been re-examined in subsequent studies (e.g. Kiser & Whelpton, 1958: 1555, 1339). It has been pointed out that the value of many studies of the effects of mobility has been decreased by the failure to hold constant such important variables as educational status, age, labour force participation, etc., so that the importance of

* For calculation of scores see appendix.

mobility itself could be assessed. In two recent articles such an attempt has been made using Puerto Rican data from the 1960 census (Macisco *et al.* 1969; 1970). These analyses showed that married migrants had lower fertility than married locals.

A number of studies have not, however, been consistent with the hypothesis and it has recently been suggested that, "Perhaps only when upward ability represents a shift from the agricultural, traditional sector of society to the industrial—rather than more or less "normal" upward movement within the industrial sector — does it have a significant impact on fertility" (Mason, David *et al.*. 1971 : 45).

Table 4 indicates that the hypothesized relationship between family size and mobility is worth exploring in this population of clerks and nurses. For it is the non-mobile elements of the local Ga population who desire the largest numbers of children and the socially and spatially mobile migrants with non-clerical or non-professional fathers who want the smallest numbers of children. In fact, the most mobile sector of the population in both social and spatial terms wants fewer children than it thinks to be ideal. (See Table 5).

TABLE 5

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN DESIRED BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	4.3	5.3	3.9	4.3
Mobile	3.9	4.6	3.8	4.1

TABLE 6

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN THOUGHT IDEAL BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	4.2	5.3	4.0	4.3
Mobile	4.1	4.7	4.1	4.4

Once indicated such a possible correlation needs explaining. The next task is to "specify the chain of relations that produces such a negative association, not only between migration or social mobility and fertility but also between desired and ideal family size and mobility (*Macisco, et. al,* 1970). Speculations as to why such a connection should appear are several and we shall examine one or two of them here:

(*a*) One is that migrants are more receptive to modern contraceptive technology (Macisco, *et al,* 1969: 178).

(*b*) Another is that mobile migrants are more achievement oriented than the local populations (*ibid*).

(*c*) An additional frequent contention is that economic constraints are the most important, as indeed the people themselves pointed out (e.g., Caldwell, 1968*a*: 95) Connected with this may be greater feelings of economic insecurity.

TABLE 7

ATTITUDE TO FAMILY PLANNING SCORE BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	6.4	5.8	6.0	6.3
Mobile	5.5	5.8	6.0	6.0

Hypothesis 1: Contraceptive Technology

As Tables 7 and 8 indicate we do not have good evidence to support the hypothesis that it is the most mobile sectors of the population who know the most and approve the most of Family Planning methods. The locals, both nurses and clerks, report that they have a wider knowledge of contraceptive techniques, and it is the local nurses with the clerical and professional fathers who are the most approving of family planning.

TABLE 8

MEAN NUMBER OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS KNOWN BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	4.2	2.9	3.0	2.3
Mobile...	4.0	2.3	3.0	2.1

Hypothesis 2: Mobile Migrants will be more Achievement Oriented

As Table 9 indicates, in three out of the four possible groups, the more mobile do exhibit higher mean scores on an index measuring their readiness to move to get promotion or to do a course of further studies. In the fourth case, that of the clerks with clerical and professional parents, there is no difference in the mean scores. However, readiness to seek promotion and small family size desires did not appear to be correlated.

TABLE 9

MEAN SCORE ON ASPIRATIONS INDEX BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	2.1	3.0	2.5	3.0
Mobile	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.8

Hypothesis 3: Economic Constraints and Insecurity

The remaining hypothesis is that concerning the role of economic constraints and insecurity. First of all we shall look at the personal assessments of the individuals of their own financial situations as being very good, good, fair, not too good, poor or very poor. Table 10 indicates quite clearly that on the whole the migrants felt themselves to be in worse financial situations than the locals. Three out of the four groups classified themselves on average as being in not too good a position. The locals were all classified as fair on average. Moreover, respondents reporting a desire for large families of five or more were more likely than the rest to assess their financial situations as being good.

TABLE 10

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF FINANCIAL SITUATION BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	Fair	Fair	Not too good	Not too good
Mobile	Fair	Fair	Fair	Not too good

It is not surprising that greater financial problems should become apparent among the migrants upon whom falls the burden of finding accommodation and so on in a relatively strange environment. The problems of migrant workers have already been fully spelt out by Caldwell and others (1969: 97 - 8). One point stressed too about the urban migrant is his frequent financial help to kin, both those back home and those who also come to find work in the town (*ibid*). We may therefore examine the content of the financial exchanges between the respondents and their kin to see if there are observable differences between the migrants and the rest.

Table 11 shows us that there are indeed differences and that they are in the expected direction, that is those who are mobile in both social and spatial terms are the ones who are shouldering the greatest burden of help to kin including parents, siblings, nephews and nieces. At the same time Table 12 indicates that these same people are receiving the least financial help from kin. Presumably this flow of help to others and very little in return is an important factor affecting the individual's assessment of his own financial situation.

It would seem therefore, on the basis of these tentative findings that it may be very instructive to pursue further both in breadth and in depth these leads regarding the social factors in the life situations of the socially and spatially mobile elements of the urban population which may be motivating them to prefer family sizes smaller than those desired by their peirs, whose life histories are characterized by greater geographical and social stability. Especially fruitful areas for exploration would appear to be feelings of economic insecurity and strain and detailed analysis of the flows of resources to and from kin. By so doing we may continue to piece together more of the links in the chain of evidence connecting together such important social facts as migration and family size and further illuminate the profound effects that migration has upon family life (Cadwell, 1969: 213).

TABLE 11

MEAN SCORE ON INDEX OF FINANCIAL HELP TO KIN BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	Social Mobility			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	3.5	3.6	3.6	2.9
Mobile	3.1	4.0	4.1	4.2

TABLE 12

MEAN SCORE ON INDEX OF FINANCIAL HELP FROM KIN BY SOCIAL AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AND OCCUPATION

Social Mobility	SPATIAL MOBILITY			
	Locals		*Immigrants*	
	Nurses	*Clerks*	*Nurses*	*Clerks*
Non-mobile	1.6	2.5	2.0	1.4
Mobile	1.6	1.8	1.2	1.6

APPENDIX: INDICES

1. INDEX: Attitude to Family Planning

Scores were allocated to the responses to the following questions:

(*a*) Is it a good thing for a couple to space the births of their children?
No = 0; Yes = 2; It depends = 1.

(*b*) Do you think it is a good idea for an educated couple to plan the number of children they have?
Yes = 2; No = 0; It depends = 1.

(*c*) What do you think of the Family Planning Services in Ghana?
Positive Response (i.e. more clinics and advice, etc. needed) = 1.

(*d*) How do you yourself feel about Family Planning information and advice?
Would like to know more = 1.

(*e*) Do you think there is any quite satisfactory method of Family Planning?

Score range 0-7 meant to indicate degree of support for and approval of Family Planning.

2. INDEX: Assessment of Financial Situation

Scores were allocated to responses to the following question
How would you describe your present financial situation?
Very good = 1; good = 2; fair = 3; not too good = 4; poor = 5; very poor = 6.
The mean score was used to indicate the relative positions of the sections of the population on the continuum.

3. INDEX: Financial Help to Kin

(*a*) Do you help your father financially?
No = 0; Occasionally = 1; Regularly = 2.

(*b*) Do you help your mother financially?
No = 0; Occasionally = 1; Regularly = 2.

(*c*) Have you helped any of your brothers/sisters financially?
No = 0; A little = 1; A lot = 2.

(*d*) Have you helped to educate or look after any of your brother's or sister's children?
None = 0; One = 1; Several = 2.

(*e*) Have you helped to educate or look after any of your younger brothers and sisters
None = 0; One = 1; Several = 2.

(*f*) Do you have many requests for financial help from relatives?
None = 0; A few = 1; Many = 2.
Total score range 0-12.

4. INDEX: Financial Help from Kin

(*a*) Has your father helped you financially since you started work?
No = 0; Occasionally = 1; Regularly = 2.

(*b*) Has your mother helped you financially since you started work?
No = 0; Occasionally = 1; Regularly = 2.

(*c*) Have any of your brothers/sisters helped you financially?
No = 0; A little = 1; A lot = 2.
Score range 0-6.

5. INDEX: Mobility Aspirations

(*a*) Would you be prepared to leave Accra and work elsewhere to get promotion in your job?
Yes = 2; No = 0; It depends = 0.

(*b*) Would you be prepared to leave home for six months or more to do further studies and improve on your present job qualifications?
Yes = 2; No = 0; It depends = 0.
Score range 0-4.
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